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# Job mobility falls during the first year of pandemic

Media Release

Released 7/07/2021

**i** Source: [Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia, February 2021](#)

Job mobility fell during the first year of the pandemic to its lowest level on record, according to annual statistics released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today.

## Job mobility in the first year of the pandemic

Bjorn Jarvis, head of Labour Statistics at the ABS, said: "In the 12 months to February 2021, 7.5 per cent of employed people changed their employer or business. This was down from 8.1 per cent in the previous year.

"Job mobility in Australia has been generally trending down for decades and reached a new low during the first year of the pandemic. Around 82,000 fewer people changed jobs than in the year before."

The fall in job mobility was particularly pronounced for males (falling from 8.4 per cent to 7.5 per cent), compared with females (7.8 per cent to 7.6 per cent).

Job mobility fell in five of the eight major occupation groups. The largest falls were for managers (7.3 per cent to 5.2 per cent), professionals (8.0 per cent to 6.5 per cent) and machinery operators and drivers (9.4 per cent to 7.9 per cent), which were also occupations less impacted by falls in employment early in the pandemic. Falls were also seen for sales workers (11.1 per cent to 9.8 per cent) and technicians and trade workers (8.7 per cent to 7.9 per cent).

Job mobility increased for labourers (7.7 per cent to 9.2 per cent) and community and personal service workers (8.6 per cent to 9.7 per cent) and remained stable for clerical and administrative workers (7.1 per cent).

Changes in job mobility also varied by industry, with the largest increase in Accommodation and food services (14.3 per cent to 17.1 per cent) and the largest decrease in Rental, hiring and real estate services (11.3 per cent to 6.8 per cent).

“In changing jobs during the first year of the pandemic, people were more likely to change their industry (59 per cent) than their occupation (47 per cent). They were also more likely to change to a job with more hours (37 per cent) than to a job with the same hours (32 per cent) or less hours (31 per cent),” Mr Jarvis said.

## **Potential workers: unemployed and those not in the labour force**

In February 2021, there were 2.2 million people who were not working but wanted to work, up from 2.1 million people in February 2020. This included over 800,000 unemployed people and 1.4 million people not in the labour force (who were either not actively looking for work and/or not available to work in the survey reference week).

Not everyone who wanted to work was available to work. Of the 2.2 million people in February 2021 who wanted to work, 1.4 million were available to start work immediately and a further 485,000 within 4 weeks (but not immediately).

There were 862,000 people in February 2021 who wanted to work, were available to start either immediately or within 4 weeks, but did not actively look for work. The main reasons they did not actively look for work were: attending an educational institution (223,000 people), child care factors (138,700 people) and responses indicating that they were a ‘discouraged job seeker’ (113,000 people, up from 103,000 in February 2020).

## **Difficulties finding work**

Almost nine out of every ten unemployed people (88 per cent) reported having some difficulty finding work in February 2021, up from 86 per cent in February 2020.

“The most common reasons reported were too many applicants for available jobs (21 per cent), insufficient work experience (14 per cent), ill health or disability (11 per cent) and no vacancies in their line of work (10 per cent),” Mr Jarvis said.

Further details can be found in [Participation, Job Search and Mobility \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia/feb-2021\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia/feb-2021) on [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au).

## **Media notes**

- Data from the Participation, Job Search and Mobility Survey can be found in the

following pages on the ABS website:

- [Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia/feb-2021\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia/feb-2021)
  - [Underemployed workers \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/underemployed-workers/feb-2021\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/underemployed-workers/feb-2021)
  - [Potential workers \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/potential-workers/feb-2021\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/potential-workers/feb-2021)
  - [Job mobility \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/job-mobility/feb-2021\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/job-mobility/feb-2021)
- Job mobility (or job churn) refers to employed people changing their employer or business. The period in focus for this survey is the previous 12 months.
  - Historical job mobility data before February 2015 can be found in Table 17 of the 2018 release of [Participation, Job Search and Mobility \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6226.0Main+Features1February%202018?OpenDocument\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6226.0Main+Features1February%202018?OpenDocument).
  - Potential workers refers to a broad group of people in the usually resident civilian population aged 15 years and over who want to work and may be active and/or available within the labour market in the short to medium term. It includes unemployed people (who are active and available labour supply in the survey reference week) and other groups who are not in the labour force but who want to work (people who aren't immediately available and/or people who aren't actively looking for work).
  - When reporting ABS data you must attribute the Australian Bureau of Statistics (or the ABS) as the source.
  - For media requests and interviews, contact the ABS Media Team via [media@abs.gov.au \(mailto:media@abs.gov.au\)](mailto:media@abs.gov.au) (8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri AEDT).
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